

# THE PLACER

A Voice of History

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## Administrator's Notes

*Melanie Barton*

Once again this year we have established a year-long topic and theme for *The Placer*. Each issue will have its own topic supporting the overall theme. The general topic for this year is the law and the theme is:

*The silent figure in the gallows, the clack of a judge's gavel, and clang of iron jail doors all speak to the growth and development of Placer County's criminal justice system.*

The topics for each issue are lawmen, lawyers and judges, famous trials, the gallows, jails and prisons, and criminals and desperados. In this issue you will enjoy learning about early county lawmen.

## 2006 Recap

The end of the year is a good time to pause and take stock of our accomplishments during the preceding 12 months. Placer County Museums staff and volunteers have worked together to meet our projected goals for the year. More artifacts have been processed, research requests answered and documents indexed than ever before.

The Living History Program is thriving and the ground work has been completed for the development of a 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Pilot Program on the Gold Rush. We met our goal of presenting a monthly Community Education Program and “*The Take 3 Challenge!*” provided docents with opportunities for ongoing training. Eleven people completed the Volunteer Training Program and are now actively participating as volunteers and docents. The Gift Shop Task Force completed their assignment and the Downtown Business Association was selected to be the vendor. The Museum Gift Shop reopened in April.

Several new exhibits have been installed including *History on the Go* and *Curves and Compromise* at the Placer County Museum, a map display at the Foresthill Divide Museum and an exhibit on Native Americans at the Golden Drift Museum. One more Pate case in the foyer of the Placer County Museum was redesigned and retrofitted for fiber optics. The Tent Theatre used to show DVD's at the Gold Country Museum has been completed and three new displays are in progress. The renovation of the upper floor of the Bernhard Winery is almost complete. The first

workshop sponsored by the Museums Division has been planned and will take place on January 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>. The drawings for the Outdoor Kitchen at the Bernhard Museum Complex have been approved and construction will begin in February.

I'm out of breath just reliving the year! Thanks to all of you who have supported Placer County Museums by volunteering, attending programs, and visiting museums. We have tried to address your interests and hope that you have learned something new about the history of the county and that you have enjoyed the programs and exhibits this past year. We look forward to establishing new goals for 2007 and, with your help, feel confident that we will achieve them. If you would like to make suggestions for additional programs and exhibits, please feel free to call me at (530) 889-6504 or email me at [mbarton@placer.ca.gov](mailto:mbarton@placer.ca.gov). ♦

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### **Lawmen of Placer County: The First 20 Years**

*Carmel Barry-Schweyer, Bob Balmain, and Sharon Balmain*

"As he came near I noticed that he was well mounted on a fine iron gray mustang, equipped in the full rig of native Californian, with spurs, silver plated bridle and saddle, a broad sombrero and rich serape thrown across his lap to keep

off the heat and dust." J.P. Dameron gave this colorful description of Samuel C. Astin, who was born in Alabama and came to the goldfields from Texas to become the first sheriff of Placer County. Astin, elected sheriff in 1851, like a politician of today was both glorified and criticized. Described as "usually cool, collected and good natured—afraid of no man, but if aroused he was a tiger, but his efforts were always for peace." The tiger appeared when in 1854 the County Grand Jury asked to examine his records and he refused. He subsequently resigned his duties and went to South America. When he returned to Placer County the county sued and recovered \$1,390.00 in taxes he owed. He died in the 1870s.

When Astin resigned, William H. Dillingham was appointed Sheriff by Judge Fitzsimmons. On April 9, 1855 William T. Hensen won the election for sheriff. He was called a model sheriff during his term but lost the election of 1856 by 104 votes to Charles King.

Charles King came from Maine, was a businessman in Washington, D.C. then came to California to seek his fortune in the gold mines. He owned and operated a saw mill and was a merchant. His business burned in 1852, the same year that he listed his occupation as *Gentleman* in

the census. Work was not very rewarding for him but he did have courage, perseverance and energy so he entered politics and was elected Sheriff in 1856. He was sheriff at a time when stage robberies along the road to Foresthill and robbing sluice boxes were common.

Lathrop L. Bullock won the 1858 election for sheriff. He came to California from Massachusetts. He held the office until 1863 when William Sexton won the election. Sexton immigrated to California from England and settled in Rattlesnake Bar with his wife, Catherine and two children. He was a miner and a teamster before winning the office of sheriff. He was credited as being, "a good Sheriff in days when it took a gritty man to fill that office." He left Placer County in 1868, then became Chief of Police in San Jose and later was in the insurance business in San Francisco and a member of the Bohemian Club, the Commonwealth Club and the Mystic Shrine. When he retired, a banquet was held at the renown Palace Hotel.



William Sexton

In 1865 A.W. Poole became sheriff with over 400 votes more than his opponent. Poole came to California from Massachusetts and lived in the mining camp of Damascus on the Foresthill Divide. He was sheriff when the brutal murder of popular Auburn merchant, William McDaniel, shocked the county. (This crime will be covered in more detail in a later edition of *The Placer*.)

Jacob H. Neff, elected sheriff, in 1867, had been a miner, gambler, tax collector and deputy sheriff. He served one term. He then went on to become a State Senator, and eventually, Lt. Governor. He retired in San Francisco. He was described as “a rosy cheeked, blue eyed, jolly old bachelor.” He died in 1909.

Benjamin D. Dunnam, was touted by the *Placer Herald* as “one of the best Sheriffs we ever had in this county, and a thousand percent better than either of the three Republicans that preceded him.” He was credited by the paper as having “broken up, arrested or driven from the county, every band of cattle thieves in it.” When elected for his second term, there was a demand for a recount. When the final count was tallied and Dunnam declared the sheriff, gunshots could be heard at Ophir, Newcastle, Clipper Gap and as far away as Pino (Loomis). The *Placer Herald* reported the celebration as, “the heartiest, liveliest, best-

humored, whole-souled, political jollification ever held in Auburn.”

All of these men were young men, in their thirties, when they held the office of sheriff and all came to California seeking a better life. It was a transient time with groups of young men moving from one gold strike to another. These young men that became sheriff were indeed gritty, energetic, and courageous.♦

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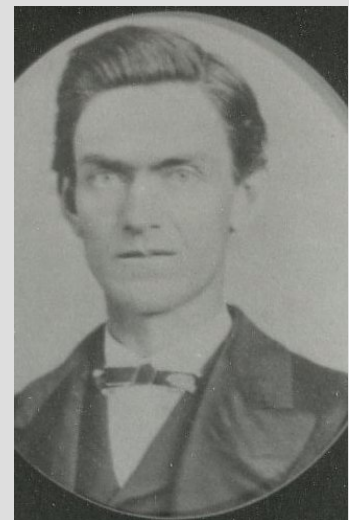
Following are photographs of other Placer County Sheriffs who served our community before the turn of the century.



William Conroy  
Placer County Sheriff  
1890-1898



John Butler  
Placer County Sheriff  
1886-1890



Charles Crosby  
Placer County Sheriff  
1877-1879



## Museums Intelligence

### Placer County Museums News

*Ralph Gibson*

Sadly, we must say goodbye to Curator of Collections, Kristin Keller. Kristin has accepted a curator position with California State Parks in Sacramento. Each of us appreciates the hard work she has done for our museums and especially our collections. Kristin, we will miss you and we wish you the best of luck on your new endeavor.

Winter is now upon us and we are gearing up for a full slate of programs and projects. The new fourth grade program at the Gold Country Museum will be tested in mid-February; internationally renowned interpreter, Sam Ham, will present a lecture on interpretation on January 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> in the newly restored Bernhard Winery; Don Albrecht will present the program *Dry Washing for Gold* in the Gold Country Museum on January 13<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m.; and the new changes in the Gold Country Museum, including a new theater (which is already open), exhibits on the three routes people took to California, and a display of letters home during the Gold Rush, will be completed by early March. Living History is also on the horizon with over 400 more students signed up for this

year's Spring Living History than last year. It will definitely be a busy couple of months, which will make the time pass quickly. So sip a little more hot tea, bundle up with a good book, and get those seed packets ready to plant. Spring will be here soon!♣

### New Fourth Grade Program at the Gold Country Museum

*Karen Mattson*

This February, Museum staff and docents will be introducing a new education program at the Gold Country Museum. The current program offers a Docent led tour and an opportunity for students to gold pan. The new program will provide additional hands on activities that will engage students with museum exhibits and provide them an opportunity to interact with documents and photographs from the Placer County Archives. The program is designed to meet specific California State Content Standards for the fourth grade. The changes are being developed so that educators can plan field trips locally and receive a quality experience that supports the curriculum. In February, a trial run of the program will be hosted with no more than three classes attending.

The Museum is recruiting individuals who may be interested in participating in this program. Please contact Karen Mattson at (530) 889-6506 for more information.♠

### Community Education Program: *Dry Washing for Gold*

Did you know that some miners used a dry washing technique to find placer gold? Dry washing, which is a technique that does not use water, began long before the Gold Rush and is a form of placer mining that is still used today. If you'd like to learn more about dry washing for gold, join us at the Gold Country Museum for this **FREE** Placer County Museums Community Education Program. The program will be presented by Don Albrecht, a Placer County Museums' Docent and gold mining expert. The program begins at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 13<sup>th</sup> and will run about one and a half hours. The Gold Country Museum is located at 1273 High Street inside the Gold Country Fairgrounds in Auburn.

Reservations are required, so please call (530) 889-6500 to reserve your seat or for more information.

### PCHS Plaque in Old Town Auburn:

*Jean Baptiste Charbonneau*

*As an infant in 1805 he accompanied his parents, Toussaint Charbonneau and Sacagawea, as they guided the Lewis & Clark Expedition. He lived along the American River Canyon, at Murderer's, Buckner's, Rattlesnake & Manhattan Bars between 1848 and 1857. In 1861 he worked as a clerk at the Orleans Hotel, located near this site. Died in Oregon shortly after leaving Auburn in 1866.*

*Placer County Historical Society - 2006*



# Placer County Historical Organization News



## President's Message

*Michael Otten,  
President*

A little rain did not deter nearly 40 hardy souls from attending the dedication of the first Placer County memorial plaque honoring Jean Baptiste Charbonneau on Sunday, Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>. The plaque and research was the result of many hours of hard work by Karri Samson, Landmarks Committee chair, and members Doris Viera, Richard Hubbard, Gayle Russell, Gene Scott, Rose Ford, Lila Swesey and Howard Fleming.

It was the eighth marker the PCHS has dedicated since 2000. The other markers PCHS has dedicated since 2000 are: Scotts' Corner Store, June 24, 2000; Auburn Public Library, May 26, 2001; Clipper Gap School, Oct. 23, 2002; Newcastle Fruit House Row, Sept. 21, 2003; Mountain Quarry Bridge, July 16, 2004; Veterans' Memorial Hall, Nov. 11, 2004, and Bosse-Morgan Building, Dec. 11, 2005. Mayor Mike Holmes, a PCHS life member, said "it is important we continue to commemorate (the county's) history. It is important not only for the tourists, but the people who come and settle under the history of this area."

Karri Samson and I presented Holmes, and County Supervisor Jim Holmes, with a Sacagawea dollar, which I often refer to as an Auburn or Placer County dollar to note that Jean Baptiste Charbonneau is the only baby and area resident to ever be depicted on an official U.S. coin. I encouraged them to always carry one of the dollars with them as I have found the coin a good way to talk about the history of the area.

California and the other states have their commemorative quarters to provide something important about each. The California quarter carries the date Sept. 9, 1850, denoting on that date it became the 31<sup>st</sup> state. It also depicts Yosemite Valley, John Muir and the Condor, reflecting in part a state commitment to protecting its past for the future.

When we talk about the Auburn gold dollar we can say the community was founded in 1848 by a French immigrant, Claude Chana, when he discovered gold in a ravine, not all that long after Chana's friend, James Marshall, made his historic find at nearby Coloma in El Dorado County. That was the same year that Jean Baptiste Charbonneau came to the area. Because Charbonneau understood several languages, he probably worked well as a clerk at the Orleans Hotel, which was not too far from where Chana made his gold discovery.

Your society has asked the Auburn City Council to seriously consider naming the Auburn School Park Preserve

after Charbonneau. Holmes said the city staff is looking to see if that could be possible. He said there may be some restrictions because of grants that provided money to fund the project. New Mayor Bob Snyder said if that is not possible the city could possibly name another park after Charbonneau or put in something that would reflect Charbonneau's role in the nation's expansion westward.

Happy New Year!♠

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## Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting

*Addah Owens,  
Vice President*

**When:** February 1, 2007

**Time:** 6:30 P.M. Dinner, 7:30 P.M. Program

**Where:** Veteran's Memorial Hall, 100 East St., Auburn, CA

**Cost:** \$13.00

**Menu:** Chinese New Year Dinner

**Mail Check To:** PCHS, c/o Betty Samson, 8780 Baxter Grade Rd., Auburn, CA. 95603

**Program:** Dr. Naida West, a former teacher of sociology and consultant-lobbyist on state environmental matters, will present a program on the influences, artifacts and research that led to her rich vein of historical novels. Her novels include *Eye of the Bear*, *River of Red Gold*, *Murder on the Middle Fork* (based on a true story and co-authored with her 90 year-old uncle), *Symon's Daughter* (memoir of her grandmother), and *From Hell to Jackson Hole*.

*Eye of the Bear* and *River of Red Gold* are perennial sellers and required reading in colleges across the U.S. – even in England. Sales have enabled Naida to establish and expand Bridge House Books, her own publishing company. All of her books will be on sale after the program.♥

## Placer County Historical Organizations

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Colfax Area Historical Society  
Myrtle Findley, (530) 346-2450  
PO Box 185  
Colfax, CA 95713-0185  
[www.foothill.net/colfax/history](http://www.foothill.net/colfax/history)

Foresthill Divide Historical  
Society  
Walter Reed,  
(530) 367-2430  
PO Box 1175  
Foresthill, CA 95631  
[www.foresthillhistory.org](http://www.foresthillhistory.org)

Friends of Griffith Quarry  
Doug Brown, (916) 663-2781  
PO Box 10  
Penryn, CA 95663-0326

Golden Drift Historical Society  
Doug Ferrier, (530) 389-2617  
PO Box 20  
Dutch Flat, CA 95714-0020

Historical Advisory Board  
Gerda Percival, (530) 889-6500  
101 Maple St. Rm. 104  
Auburn, CA 95603

Joss House Museum and  
Chinese History Center  
Charles Allen  
PO Box 9126  
Auburn, CA 95603  
(530) 878-4602

Lincoln Highway Association  
Robert Dietrich, (916) 962-1428  
P.O. Box 2554  
Fair Oaks, CA 95628-2554  
[www.lincolnhwy.org](http://www.lincolnhwy.org)

Loomis Basin Historical  
Society Alice Barnes, (916)  
652-7844  
PO Box 2195  
Loomis, CA 95659-2195  
[www.ppgn.com](http://www.ppgn.com)

Maidu Interpretive Center  
Kristie Stevens,  
(916) 774-5934  
1960 Johnson Ranch Drive  
Roseville, CA 95661  
[www.roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum](http://www.roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum)

Newcastle Portuguese Hall  
Association  
Aileen Gage, (530) 885-9113  
PO Box 993, 690 Taylor Rd.  
Newcastle, CA 95658

Placer County Historical  
Society  
Michael Otten, (530) 888-7837  
PO Box 5643  
Auburn, CA 95604  
[www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org)

Placer County Genealogical  
Society  
Jerry Unruh, (530) 887-2646  
PO Box 7385  
Auburn, CA 95604  
[www.pcgenes.com](http://www.pcgenes.com)

Rocklin Historical Society  
Ron Petersen (916) 630-8902  
History Museum  
(916) 624-3464  
PO Box 752  
Rocklin, CA 95677-0752  
[www.rocklinhistory.org](http://www.rocklinhistory.org)

Roseville Historical Society  
(916) 773-3003  
557 Lincoln St.  
Roseville, CA 95678  
[www.rosevillehistorical.org](http://www.rosevillehistorical.org)

### ***Sing Me Your Story-Dance Me Home***

Exhibit Opens at the Maidu Interpretive Center in Roseville  
February 17<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m.



The artwork on the left and right  
were produced by artist  
Lyn Risling

For more information about the  
exhibit, please call  
(916) 774-5934



## Calendar of Events

### January

- Jan 13<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 am** Community Education Program: Dry Washing for Gold by Don Albrecht at the Gold Country Museum. Reservations required. Contact (530) 889-6500.
- Jan 13<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 pm** Live Animal Show at the Maidu Interpretive Center. Show included with center entrance fee (\$4 adults, \$3.75 children). Contact (916) 774-5934.
- Jan 15<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Business Meeting at the Foresthill Divide Museum. Contact (530) 367-2430.
- Jan 15<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** Rocklin Historical Society Meeting at the Rocklin Library. Contact (916) 624-3464.
- Jan 17<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society Meeting at the Loomis Library. Contact (916) 652-7844.
- Jan 25<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogy Society General Meeting in the Beecher Room at the Placer County Library. Contact (530) 887-2646.
- Jan 27<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 am** Indian Museum Free Day at the Maidu Interpretive Center. Contact (916) 774-5934.

### February

- Feb 1<sup>st</sup>, 6:30 pm** Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting at the Veteran's Memorial Hall. Cost is \$13 per person. Contact Betty Samson (530) 885-5074.
- Feb 17<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 am** *Sing Me Your Story-Dance Me Home* exhibit opening & artist presentation at the Maidu Interpretive Center. Photographer Dugan Aguilar, poet Janice Gould, and artist Judith Lowry will give presentations. Contact (916) 774-5934.
- Feb 19<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Potluck Meeting at the Foresthill Memorial Hall. Contact (530) 367-2430.
- Feb 19<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** Rocklin Historical Society Meeting at the Rocklin Library. Contact (916) 624-3464.
- Feb 21<sup>st</sup>, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society Meeting at the Loomis Library. Contact (916) 652-7844.
- Feb 21<sup>st</sup>, 6:30 pm** Placer County Historical Advisory Board Meeting in the Placer County Museum Gallery in the Auburn Courthouse. Contact (530) 889-6500.
- Feb 22<sup>nd</sup>, 6:30 pm** Placer County Genealogy Society General Meeting in the Beecher Room at the Placer County Library. Contact (530) 887-2646.

**Placer County Museums**  
**101 Maple Street**  
**Auburn, CA 95603**

